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ABSTRACT

This paper, originally presented with a film introduction to the minicourse model, overviews the development of a series of microteaching courses designed to train teachers the specific teaching skills necessary to function effectively in the teaching-learning situation. Advantages of the instructional sequence are noted: focus on specific teaching skills which are precisely defined and illustrated in an instructional film, and practice in a microteaching lesson with specific feedback via video tape recordings for evaluation. The research and development sequence used in building and testing each minicourse is outlined with special emphasis given to the research-based development tuned to realities of the classroom through a series of at least three field tests and revisions. The 17 minicourses currently completed or under testing or development are listed with their course goals. Minicourse #1, "Effective Questioning in Classroom Discussion (Elementary)"--which includes the film presented with this paper--is available from Macmillan Educational Services, Inc. (See also ED 024 647 and ED 024 650) Others in advanced stages of testing are #2, "Thought and Language: Skills for Teaching Kindergarten Children with Minimal Language Experience" (SP 003 610); #3, "Effective Questioning in a Classroom Discussion (Secondary)"; #4, "Verbal Interaction" (SP 003 609); and #5, "Effective Tutoring in Elementary School Mathematics" (SP 003 602). (JS)

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THE MINICOURSE INSTRUCTIONAL MODEL*

by
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Goals of Our Program

The purpose of my paper is to introduce you to the instructional model that has been developed at the Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development and is being applied to produce materials which train teachers to use specific teaching skills. The goal of our Teacher Education Program is to develop a system of courses that will train teachers in virtually all of the skills necessary to function effectively in the teaching-learning situation. The program has been in operation for three years. At this time our first course, Minicourse 1, has been produced commercially and is available from Macmillan Educational Services. We have completed development of four additional minicourses. Another twelve courses are currently being developed and are at different steps in the development cycle. Table 1 lists our courses and briefly describes the goal of each course.

The Minicourse Instructional Model

I would now like to show you a brief film that describes our instructional model. This is the first film teachers see when they take Minicourse 1. It is designed to introduce them to the course. Minicourse 1 is entitled: "Effective Questioning - Elementary Level. It is designed to train intermediate grade teachers in the use of twelve specific skills related to effective questioning in a class discussion lesson. [Show Minicourse 1 Introduction film.]

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* This paper has been prepared for presentation at the annual AERA meeting to be held in Minneapolis, March 2-6, 1970.

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I believe you will agree that the minicourse instructional sequence has a number of advantages over conventional teacher education programs. First, the minicourse deals with specific teaching skills rather than generalizations. Second, these skills are precisely defined and illustrated in the instructional film. Third, the trainee practices the skills in a microteaching lesson which provides an easier and less threatening situation than the total class. Fourth, the teacher receives specific feedback by viewing a videotape recording of his own performance and evaluating his teaching.

Those of you who are familiar with B. O. Smith's recent book, Teachers for the Real World may have observed that the minicourse meets all of the essentials for effective training in teaching skills that Smith identified.

Effectiveness of the Minicourse

To date we have collected rigorous pre-course and post-course teacher performance data on seven minicourses. The research findings for Minicourse 1 were reported at last year's AERA meeting and today my colleagues will report our results on three of our more recent courses. To date all of the minicourses we have developed have brought about highly significant changes in the behavior of teachers who took these courses.

The R & D Sequence

Table 2 lists briefly the major steps in the research and development sequence we follow in building and testing a minicourse. Time does not permit a detailed discussion of this sequence but I would like to call your attention to several important points.

First note that each minicourse goes through at least three field tests and revisions. In one of these field tests we collect rigorous data on actual teacher performance, usually by taking videotape samples in the teacher's classroom before and after the course. If the course does not meet our performance criteria we conduct additional field tests and revisions. Thus, when our development work is completed we can show hard evidence that the course meets its objectives.

Another point I would like to make is that our courses have their roots in basic research in education and the behavioral sciences. We do not minimize the importance of basic research as do some applied researchers. In fact, we find far too little basic research in many of the areas in which we develop minicourses. A greater foundation of basic research would greatly simplify our job and reduce the chance of making costly mistakes.

Finally, I would point out that our courses are closely tuned to the realities of the classroom. Each revision of a minicourse is based primarily upon feedback from our field test teachers. This feedback slowly reshapes our initial course into one that is pertinent to teacher needs and can be used effectively in almost any school.

Table 1

IN-SERVICE EDUCATION COURSE TESTING SCHEDULE

		Testing Dates*
Minicourse 1:	"Effective Questioning in a Classroom Discussion" (Elementary) is being commercially produced and will be available in February, 1970 from Macmillan Educational Services, Inc.	
Minicourse 2: 003 610	"Thought and Language: Skills for Teaching Kindergarten children with Minimal Language Experience" Course Goal: To increase teacher skills that encourage the acquisition of language.	OFT Oct. 1969
Minicourse 3:	"Effective Questioning in a Classroom Discussion (Secondary)" Course Goal: To increase the effectiveness of the questioning techniques of secondary school teachers and the quantity and quality of student participation (grades 7-12) in class discussion situations.	OFT Oct. 1969
Minicourse 4: 003 609	"Verbal Interaction" Course Goals: To train teachers to categorize their classroom verbal behavior using Flanders' system and to increase teachers' use of indirect verbal behavior and decrease teachers' use of direct verbal behavior.	OFT Oct. 1970
Minicourse 5: 003 602	"Effective Tutoring in Elementary School Mathematics" Course Goal: To increase the amount of time teachers spend in structured tutoring of students' math difficulties, to increase student proficiency in finding and correcting their own computational errors; to increase teachers' effectiveness in diagnosis, demonstration of problem-solving procedures, and evaluation of learning during math tutoring sessions.	OFT Oct. 1969
Minicourse 7:	"Induction--An Instructional Technique" Course Goal: To help teachers acquire the skills necessary for setting up and conducting learning experiences where students use the inductive process.	PFT Mar. 1970

* OFT = Operational Field Test, MFT = Main Field Test, PFT = Preliminary Field Test

		Testing Dates	
Minicourse 8:	"Organizing the Kindergarten for Independent Learning and Small Group Instruction" Course Goal: To provide kindergarten teachers with a set of skills (organizational procedures) that will make it possible for them to instruct, uninterrupted, a group of 5 children for ten minutes while the remaining 20 or more children work independently.	OFT	Oct. 1969
Minicourse 9:	"Thought Questions in the Intermediate Grades" Course Goal: To increase teacher effectiveness (grades 4-6) in asking questions which require the use of complex thinking skills.	OFT	Mar. 1970
Minicourse 10:	"Role Playing as an Instructional Technique" Course Goal: To train teachers in the use of role-playing skills that serve to increase pupil knowledge and understanding of instructional materials.	PFT	Apr. 1970
Minicourse 14:	"Improving Teacher and Pupil Skills in Discussing Controversial Issues" Course Goal: To develop teacher and pupil skills in discussion and critical appraisal of controversial social issues.	PFT	Mar. 1970
Minicourse 15:	"Teaching Skills that Develop Independent Learning in the Upper Elementary Years" Course Goal: To develop teacher skills that facilitate learner independence in a wide range of subject areas.	MFT	Feb. 1970
Classroom Simulation 1:	"Techniques for Evaluating and Solving Pupil Disruptions to the Learning Environment (Upper Elementary Years)" Course Goal: To develop teaching skills in solving problems that result from the actions of individual pupils who disrupt the classroom learning environment.	PFT	Apr. 1970
Stimulation-Discussion-Action 1:	"Confrontations - A Human Relations Training Unit" Course Goal: To enable teachers to (1) analyze social-minority problems at their school, and (2) propose and implement solutions to those problems.	OFT	Oct. 1970

Table 2

THE MAJOR STEPS IN THE DEVELOPMENT CYCLE

1. Research and Data Gathering - Includes review of literature, classroom observations, and preparation of report on the state of the art.

2. Planning - Includes definition of skills, statement of objectives, determination of course sequence and small scale feasibility testing.

3. Developing Preliminary Form of Product - Includes preparation of instructional and model lessons, handbooks, and evaluation devices.

4. Preliminary Field Testing - Conducted by Laboratory personnel in one to three schools, using 6 to 12 teachers. Interview, observational, and questionnaire data collected and analyzed.

5. Main Product Revision - Revision of product as suggested by the preliminary field test results.

6. Main Field Testing - Conducted by Laboratory personnel in 5 to 15 schools with 30 to 100 teachers. Quantitative data on teachers' pre-course and post-course performance are collected, usually in the form of classroom videotapes. Results are compared with course objectives.

7. Operational Product Revision - Revision of product as suggested by the main field test results.

8. Operational Field Testing - Conducted by regular school personnel in 10 to 30 schools involving 40 to 200 teachers. Interview, observation, and questionnaire data are collected and analyzed.

9. Final Product Revision - Revision of product as suggested by operational field test results.

10. Dissemination and Distribution - Report at professional meetings, in journals, etc. Work with publisher who contracts for commercial distribution. Monitor distribution to provide quality control.